



FRANÇOIS LARUELLE 2018-02-09

HOMO EX MACHINA – HOW ONE BECOMES MACHINE-MAN

PHILOFICTION AUTOMATION, NON-LARUELLE, NON-PHILOSOPHY, TECHNOLOGY

We ordinarily recognize a single machine-Man¹ tradition. But there are two, perhaps three; they appear the moment when the grouping of the objects of knowledge and history of ideas to which philosophy is accustomed is substituted for another grouping, that of the *eras of power* or *techno-political modes of production of man*. These notions embody a “change of terrain²” or at least a change of “problematic” in the philosophy and theory of history. Here, we are supposing them as acquired without showing either their necessity or importance.

The most well known of these traditions, though not the oldest, comes together and begins with Descartes. It combines the anatomical and physico-medical description of man with his metaphysical foundation and a physical and technical model of the body with a technicist and voluntarist model of creation: the reconciliation of man as creature of the technician and man as the automaton of God. The second tradition is only discerned and named with Nietzsche, who makes us aware of it by overcoming it. This is a more expressly techno-political tradition of the human body, a lineage perhaps even older than the first because it finds in the *polis*, in its morals and its justice, the horizon of power relations (and sometimes of “hegemony”) between the soul and the body, between gods and men. We must begin thinking this *techné* proper to the *polis* in its specificity and its continuity starting with the “domestication” that Nietzsche sees at work everywhere in the modern world. In a sense, the properly “Nietzschean” perspective of “active” breeding and discipline, including this “reactive” and “gregarious” domestication, extends this lineage of machine-Man without really being inscribed in it, because it must instead explain how “domestication” is a mimetics and a side-effect of “breeding”.

We shall not oppose the first tradition to the second as an anatomical and metaphysical version to a political version of the being of man, as a project of analysis and intelligibility to a project of utility and manipulation. The first supposes a techno-political basis as much as the second, but one that is distinct and proceeds through an assemblage of the powers that innervate this physical and metaphysical knowledge of man. And the second produces as many effects of knowledge as the first, but these effects are distinct and, as we know, have instead been located in the vicinity of the genealogy of the “human sciences”. The reduction of the knowledges of man to techno-political *a priori*s that subtend historical existence makes the differential history of machine-Man visible by detaching this notion from its Cartesian, physical, and medical framework and in particular by distinguishing in the

object of the human sciences the new avatar of a conception of man whose discovery would have been unbelievable at that time. What is the true distinction between Cartesian man and the man of the human sciences? It is not the fact that one is traced from simple machines of the time and the other is finally brought to its humanity. The first had all the humanity of which its time was able to conceive, and the second had the whole aspect of inhumanity that the new clinic, psychology, and psychiatry introduced into it—social machines that transmit power differently than the physical and the technical, but no less effectively. It no longer holds that the first is related to mechanisms as if to a metaphor, while the second would really internalize the grips of social power. There is nothing less metaphorical than metaphor; such a relation does not stop the flux of power or only seems to suspend it the better to redeploy it. The only criteria are internal to the powers themselves, to the modality of their assemblages. The Cartesian machine-Man, and perhaps all the physical, medical, and metaphysical knowledge that supports it and gives it its existence and "materiality", embodies what should be called—in opposition to "micropolitics", which is only a determinate mode of production—a *macropolitics* of power. It puts individual bodies in a relation of immediate struggle, of which the anatomy of torture³ is a good example and which overflows the penal field, but these bodies are primarily endowed with a capacity that is their essence, the measure of which is provided by the infinitely large: the body of the creative and annihilating sovereign, subject of power, and that of the submissive or rebellious and annihilated creature. This epoché of power should be called *despotic*, since struggle exists here immediately only through the distance, height, and abstraction in which omnipotence stands—be it that of the constructor of the automaton or the mechanic—thus excluding the mixtures and blends that would manage to attenuate the rigor of this *corps-à-corps*. These are all theories of "creation continued", of physical man and of the automation which should be appropriately inscribed—without breaking their Cartesian specificity—in this techno-political mode of the production of man who measures forces through the former and the latter in the abstract relations of infinite debt and struggle. Insofar as it is onto-theo-political *par excellence*, it combines the creative and annihilating power of the sovereign with the technical power of the constructor of automata and forms with them a single flux of power, because the second can give the appearance of the finality and autonomy with which God has endowed his work. It only assigns as an external and indifferent limit to this flux this nothingness of capacity that is linked to the omnipotence of God, finding in torture the verification or crosschecking of creation, a *torture continued* that gradually reduces the creature to this nothingness by which the sovereign is exalted.

"Micropolitics" properly speaking makes the machine-Man of the human sciences possible. Admirably analyzed elsewhere⁴ under what are called "disciplines", it is with micropolitics that power passes from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, that it changes objects or introduces a variation of the body in that which is included in the flows of power: less the anatomical members than forces and functions, less the objective body *in* space and in time than time and space as a continuous deployment of bodies, as a play of forces, a whole transcendental aesthetic and dynamic of powers concerning what is specific to them, i.e. the infinitesimal rather than the generic. Modern disciplines do not forego representation, not even the Large and the Small which remain complementary poles, but they proceed to a new distribution of the Large and the Small, since power divides itself, exerts itself, and measures itself against the infinitesimal end of its effect and the social-global, institutional end of its exercise. The individual-in-the-institution replaces the creature submissive to the sovereign, a new coupling of man, society, and machines where the sovereign loses his abstract, despotic, and transcendent figure to be incarnated, immersed in subjugated bodies and to constitute with them an immediate, horizontal, and increasingly transversal continuity of the flows of power that preside over the struggle of separated bodies, that fill in their intervals and their gaps through an infinite division, a ramification which begins a long historical process of the identification and reconciliation of the individual and the social body. The remote goal of micropolitics is the following: how can an individual *represent* the global social body for another individual⁵?

Another body, new technical and social machines—but always this complex or synthesis of Man *and* machine, this coupling which is perhaps the essence of the machine.. This is precisely the great Nietzschean invention (also his humility) and the design of the third age of Man still to come: unlike the ancient and modern "machine-man systems", the machine is no longer simply one side of the relation, for it exists primarily in the *and* itself, in the correlation of the terms. Such as Nietzsche discovers it in the mechanistic and physico-chemical "metaphors" of man, the essence of the machine is the coupling itself, the connection in the pure state, the *eidōs*-machine, the synthesis that is a transfer, the transfer that is continuous, the machine as the metaphorical of metaphor, i.e. *the machine ultimately without "metaphor", the absolute identity-in-becoming of man and machine*. Neither technicians, technocrats, nor technologists have been successful in crafting the theory that Nietzsche formulated: that of the cog as cog or the knot as knot: the identity of break and flux, of halting and restarting, of breakdown and continuation and also of the piece and its function, of production and functioning, of the wheel and cog or re-action ("the true reaction is that of action"; action as repetition, in and by its arrest itself of a halted action, etc.). He does not, like Marx, extract such and such types of machines or productive Forces in accordance with determined Relations of production, which are only intelligible *under* these relations. He identifies the essence of any social or technical schema whatsoever—an essence which is itself neither mechanistic nor finalist—with a Relation of production and, conversely, the *Relation* (of production) with the new productive Force. It is the *Relation* become relative to itself, i.e. absolute and autonomous, the becoming-Relation or the apprehended structure of madness, that becomes the main productive Force.

In its "machinic" rather than "mechanical" [*machinal*] sense, the machine seems to be opposed to structure as a play of differential elements without invariance and in pure becoming, a play of invariant differential elements, of fixed places in which the movement of displacement and the condensation of actors produce nothing but a false becoming reduced to *positions*. But the machine only destroys structure—the rigidity of predetermined articulations—by achieving it, by converting it into its ideal

essence, by identifying continuous change, the real movement of the actors and differential breaks. This is why it does not develop its machinic effects in a single defined plane and in a specific mode as structure but allows all the possible combinations through a system of *suspensions* or *cogs* whose formal, syntactic articulation is that of the simultaneity of the break and the continuous, but which can traverse and connect all the sectors of experience in the manner of a schema. An übermachine is a ramification of cogs that can be economic, juridical, scientific, penal, political. In particular, the acquisition of this concept of the machine makes it possible to produce the biopolitical complex, a synthesis of life and machine which is neither mechanistic, nor physico-chemical, nor structural, nor behaviorist and behavioral.

What happens to the agent? It stops maintaining a metaphorical relation to the machine and in turn is confused with this relation to... which is every possible, identically inhuman and überhuman, but certainly not human, essence of the machine—the cog of the State that is identical to the State itself... The last avatar of machine-Man is the destruction not of Man and Machine, but of that which in them would separate and distinguish them from one another, their "intermediate forms" that would prevent the machinization of the former and the humanization of the latter. Übermensch or übermachine, it's all the same. It would be necessary to re-turn *Modern Times* in line with the times to come: a cog functions as an arm for Charlot⁶, and a leg as a cog alternatively. Charlot does nothing but emerge from the machine full of pieces and cogs; he begins as a postindustrial immigrant and nomad to become the man of the human and industrial sciences, an emergence of the process to the state of Cartesian mechanics. This is a recurrence of the "machine-man system" that *becomes* the *a priori* of history, the limit and tendency of its becoming.

It will be said that all of this is still metaphorical, that the word "machine" changes meaning and usage. And it is true that there is a continuity from the simple machine to the übermachine, among others a continuous transfer of meaning which will be appreciable to those who enjoy meaning; it is even this transfer-on-the-spot, this emanation on the spot of the word "machine" that we precisely call übermachine rather than meta-phor. This amphibology, the same name for the thing and essence in an über(meta)phor is by no means accidental. The übermachine, the "confusion" of the existing machine and its essence, also of machine and man, is the amphibology *par excellence* that gives its "meaning" to the history to come, a history we shall return to. In order to avoid objections external to the thing, nothing prevents us any longer to call such machines or continuous breaks "power games". A power game is a knot as knot, the pure connection as such where the two knotted ends form the continuity of the knot itself; the knot denuded of what it knots, the becoming-machine of man and simultaneously the becoming human of the machine...the universal cog.

Biopolitical Parallelism

Here, we shall not follow the more or less continuous intertwining of the first two paths, the overlapping points between a macro-technicist aim and a micropolitical aim of the body. The explication and manipulation of man are consistently tied together, since the technicist analysis of bodies, which makes them intelligible, is not separated from an aim of power, and their manipulation as automata is not distinguished from a knowledge that it supposes and a new knowledge that it produces. The history of these traditions has been partially formulated in the historicist or Nietzschean manner of a genealogy of "docile bodies" and of "labor power".

The theory of the eras of power by contrast allows for us to elaborate the biopolitical figure of machine-Man. Biopolitics is one of these syntheses that overlap the synthesis of machine-Man and specify it as a much narrower version of the already old problem of the political investments of biology and of living bodies more generally. Its current urgency, i.e. its resurgence in noted "ideological" and "sociobiological" forms, forces us to take back up in this perspective the problem of machine-Man and its modern *techno-political a priori*. Put back onto this terrain, biopolitics as the *technè of life* will have in turn witnessed several eras: there is a classical bio-technè, which remains a bio-logos even in the very exclusion of a properly "biological" perspective (in the contemporary sense) on bodies; there is a micropolitical bio-technè that serves as a perspective—not as a veritable method, but as a political assemblage, a machine of power that coordinates them and organizes them on its level—for the methods, theories, and experimental work of cellular biology (for example). Lastly, there is a biopolitics that is not just a historical *a priori* of the grand syntheses—in their variously proportioned overlappings and mixtures—evoked by the experimentation on living matter, information theory, and the informatic reduction of the living and of power over the living, but also a new formation, including the critique of the current political investments of biology (that of systems theory and information theory), yet the better to squeeze out their "übermachinic" element and bring them to their completion and their fulfillment. The "superior form" of Systems and Information is in the theory of the "cog", of the übermachine, of the machinic schema, which from then on will be sought out.

This biopolitics of the future is a mode of a more general synthesis, the synthesis of matter and the Idea, i.e. the synthesis of a *hylé* in becoming, of a continuous material flux that is the essence of power, the very capacity of power and life. Life is one of the "contraries" of power, yet the former is also identical or simultaneous with the latter. And this is true to such an extent that one can say indifferently that life is the hyletic flux on which power is nothing but a break, just as much as one can say that life in the strict sense is a break on a continuum of power, that before being power over living bodies, it continuously secretes or produces simultaneously biological and political bodies, that it inscribes life and the effects of life in the effects of power, that bodies are not neutral or indifferent substrates upon which institutional forms of domination and qualities are "layered". Life is a means for power, and vice versa. These functional reversals of hierarchy between life and power within the single biopolitical continuum derive from the syntax of the coupling or the cog, which proceeds by dividing and reversing from one contrary to the other. This

alternative coupling destroys every immediate parallelity of life and power (for example, the organic metaphors of society, and vice versa) founded on their average, coded, and represented forms. But it reproduces this parallelity in the superior form of a *biopolitical parallelism* that remains fundamentally vicious, more reproductive than productive. There is always a reciprocal *Aufhebung* of life and power, a sublation adapted to their pure, ideal, and superior forms, one that is reduced to a becoming, no doubt, but one that cannot be prevented from returning to itself and reflecting in itself an infinite convergence of contraries. There is possibly a non-Euclidean geometry of this parallelism, one that is more "powerful" than its previous forms but one that merely better confirms the co-belonging, inseparability, and relativity of life and power condemned to be determined reciprocally, to be *de-vitalized* (and not only to be de-vitalized in their most organic and naturalistic forms), and also to be de-politicized, no doubt, but not at all to be really de-potentialized. Since biopolitical parallelism is confirmed by every critique of "sociobiology", it takes refuge in every *bankruptcy*, every real *loss* of its capacity.

This new regularity, which transmits microrationalization and Cartesian macrorationality in a project of the *überraionalization* of individuals, is as easy to formulate, as it is difficult to conceive. This is the radical identification (or simultaneity, rather)—in a "common" assemblage—of nature and production, *physis and technè*, life and technics. Nietzsche is the thinker in general who teaches us the immediate coincidence of contraries that tradition separated or distinguished through mediations or liaisons, through generalities taken from theology, economy, politics, science, and possibly from biology, etc. One must imagine the simultaneity of contraries, of life and power, in the complex of a biopolitics that never stops dividing *ad infinitum* and never stops ramifying into its contraries, since the forms of power are not distinguished from those of life except to be identified with them *ad infinitum*. This identity is no longer fixed or reified in an anatomical or physiological figure of the body or in a precise institutional figure of power. This is the identity of a simultaneity, a pure becoming, *an infinite biopolitical becoming of organisms and institutions* assembled together for a new constellation on condition of losing their old forms, a becoming which does not begin with a given figure of power or particular biological properties and which is not completed somewhere in the recognition of "results" or *de facto* final efforts.

The philosophers who have turned life into Being and essence have always called "life" both flux (continuous and self-constituting becoming) and a particular phase, a break of this flux. For Plotinus, Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, Husserl, life is the emanation of the One and a stasis of this emanation; the becoming of contraries and one of these contraries; the will to power and one of its modes; the *élan vital* and the self-enclosed organism; the flux of transcendental consciousness and a psycho-natural determination... Life is the simultaneity of essence and existence, matter as *hylé* and, at the same time, a break; a condensation, both an abbreviation and an extension, a deconcentration, a spatio-temporalization of this intensive matter. Philosophy—here, I am not speaking of biology—has had no other means of conceiving the essence of life except through this amphibological schema that is inscribed in the great Western amphibology of the identity of Being and being and that calls "life" both the substance of things and one of its modes. Biopolitics thus asserts to have never been a scientific project. It is the set of power Relations that continually invest and disinvest the analysis of the living.

Nevertheless, this "übermachinic" articulation of the cog or "power game" doesn't just define the *philosophical essence*, i.e. the only possible *essence*, of life, it is reflected in biological theory itself in forms that philosophy will judge as empirical and reactive. Not only does the "cog" as simultaneously indivisible and divisible flux, as transfer that remains in-itself in the very act of its communication, contain a positive theory of information and a theory of systems applied to pure becoming. But also and inversely, it will be acknowledged that the current theories of systems and of information are "reactive" and "gregarious" versions of the theory of biopolitical flux, that the notion of the "black box" could find new forms and produce new effects in the notion of the cog or power game. We know the list of schemata in which bio-technè has attempted to exert its grasp on life, and it contains almost the whole history of Philosophy: the "seed", mechanisms, the stimulus and the reflex arc, *Gestalt*, the "system", information, encoding, structure, the complementary pair of the innate and the acquired. Each of these schemata blends biological information and the technological project in various but always-vicious proportions. It can be thought for reasons internal to the becoming of philosophy that they are all without exception replaced by the ultimate and pure bio-techno-political schema of the "übermachinic", which selects and gathers what was in them in the sense of becoming, heterogeneity, and materiality, and also in the sense of continuity, which eliminates their vicious and empirical character as simple blends. The destruction of these biopolitical mixtures is part of the program of Man-and-machine. In the becoming-real of the machine-man system, in the pure connection or simultaneity of these contraries, is thus also inscribed the decline of the lefty or fascistic "ideologies" that turn together in the vicious circle of the innate and the acquired.

This bio-technè indeed establishes, so to speak, a field of constitution, a simultaneously objective and subjective transcendental episteme, a regularity that makes *possible* both biology in the theoretical and experimental sense (possible: obviously not its work and its result, but its power over life, power of experimentation and theorization) and these infinite sociobiological discourses whose "ideological" voracity compensates for the lack of self-awareness in which they stand and flourish. They never stop extracting traits from this historical and theoretical *a priori*, which, unlike these discourses, will no longer extend, expand, or be enveloped in a new figure replacing them. A regularity is neither a law nor even the rule of a becoming but is itself a rule-in-becoming, a field that is also a flux, a continuum that is also a becoming. It will gather together what it dispersed—the biopolitical philosophemes, themes, or theses of Plato, the Stoics, Descartes, Leibniz, La Mettrie, etc. This bio-techno-political field does not directly envelop the procedures and experimentations of biology, but it unfolds alongside the latter, runs along or clings to its techniques and its results in an infinite curve, in an immediate relation with them but without being conflated with them. The

biological field “properly speaking”, to the extent that something of the sort exists, is never entirely and definitively closed. It is self-enclosed locally and provisionally in a *biological relevance* whose materials, technical means, and theoretical and social goals are selected from this infinite biopolitical regularity.

Perhaps it is biological knowledge, alongside the most banal socio-political interventions, that helps separate the universal biopolitical flux and make it diverge into two branches: the one that remains hidden behind it and that we are attempting to grasp with the notion of an accomplished biopolitical amphibology, and the other that emerges within or on the shared periphery of the disciplines of life and power, fields which have from then on become transcendent and external. By passing into them, by getting a grip on their presuppositions, the flux separates from itself, it divides its complex unity or its simultaneity into simple blends of biological references and ideological themes. The whole adulterated biopolitics of the moderns is of the order of the *mixture*; it falsifies Nietzsche with a local biological knowledge and falsifies biology with the elitist and fascistic side, which is one of the two sides of Nietzschean thought. A whole onto-theo-biology, a dualism of the innate and the acquired, a gregarious conception of the elite, a conception of natural difference massively invested by political prejudices, a conception of cultural difference massively invested by biological prejudices, i.e. “cognitions” halted and rendered absolute—this is how the continuous biopolitical flux is decomposed by passing back into the prism of culture that it has helped constitute...

Bio-technè is still to be born, but we can grasp its principle now. It is last to be born due to its essence, and the shape of its recurrence is provided by Nietzsche when he radically reprises the Platonic project of a government of living beings and also its gathering of all the physico-chemico-medico-socio-biological *possibilities* of the past that make it possible to constitute the history of its old forms in their irreducibility and their historical contingency. It is the *typos* and *topos* that give them meaning and value. Its internal structure is so particular, as we shall see, that it makes necessary the emergence in cultural consciousness of the expressly posited relations of life, of its power and of the power over life, just as it makes possible and inevitable from then on its critique, which goes hand in hand with its description. Here as well, it suffices to describe this ultimate bio-techno-political formation to make its limits—which are those of the Nietzschean epoché—appreciable and perhaps *thinkable*. Such a horizon that would unfold and refold, winding and unfurling along an infinite edge, weaves the malevolent snares in which all our attempts to protect and liberate personal or natural life remain included. We can only think life at best in living systems, i.e. ecosystems, which are still forms of power proper to thought. These are *eco-logoi*, as if *logoi* were never anything but living systems, as if living beings were never anything but thoughts in the circle of a reciprocal mastery that has still not borne its most bitter fruits, as if a *fatum* reduced our most revolutionary attempts to old thoughts... Why has the problem of a step-beyond bio-technè, which is in the process of being born, as well as its future become crucial? It's because this new and last *a priori* particularly involves the fact that power and life, in senses that are not completely old, are reconciling in unprecedented forms, i.e. through the same process as Man *and* machine. What corresponds with the übermachine is a new bio-engineering that guarantees the infinite, absolute, interminable pairing—ensured and confirmed by itself—of *life-as-power* and of *power-as-living*. The new biopolitical complex ensures the coincidence, the *a priori*—“originary”, if you will, but always in becoming—simultaneity of an omnipotent, intensive vitality that more and more rigorously subjugates itself, and of a continuous power that is ramified as life. Thus is born the fourth kingdom of life: that which is neither vegetal, nor animal, nor crystalline, which is no longer an object of science fiction but which gathers in itself infinite vegetal patience, animal and human aggressiveness, and the continual liminal growth of crystals. This is the project of a self-domination that exceeds the unindustrious micropolitical “disciplines” in extension, depth, and intensity. A new avatar of biopolitical genius that humanity exerts on itself, the *superior form of racism* against diminutive, ordinary racism, and not just racism as superior life...

The Biopolitical Genius⁷ and the Superior Form of Racism

Biotechnical development divides the concept of experimentation into two or three lineages. There is experimentation in the ordinary sense, which occurs *under* theoretical, technical, and ethical rules. And an experimentation that makes the rule, that is to itself its own rule, a generalized experimentation whose object involves the powers that assemble life, rather than the global or specific properties of the living, which does not obey any scientific or moral rule at all but immanently engenders its own criteria. This experimentation is what forms the real content of the biopolitics to come. Above all as a transvaluation of its scientific form, it will be distinguished from the aberrant and fascistic forms of “human” or “animal” experimentation that are quite morally and scientifically *contradictory*, since they conserve, despite everything, the scientific and moral claims that the preceding had abandoned by claiming to transvaluate them. Against this vulgar concept of experimentation, the pure concept of the biopolitical genius will emerge as an experimentation that leads the power of life back onto itself, potentially through its scientific forms or its monstrous forms, which serve as its relays but to which it is irreducible. A politics becomes really experimental, and experimentation ultimately replaces the Marxist concept of “practice”, when the distinction of objects, means, first matters, and products is erased in the differential distinction of methods, in the generalization and triumph of the “means”, when it has been understood that there are no longer “contradictions” in things. A generalized strategy differentially relates and determines the one by the other in a continuous “machinic” chain, yet one that is outside of every ethical or scientific “end”, i.e. the processes (whether theoretical or not) of power. Universal biopolitics is the becoming-method, the becoming-rule of experimentation, and thus also the destruction of methods and rules as the “invariant” horizons of research. For its part, experimentation loses the relative exteriority of its processes to the living body; it becomes *the immanent essence of life*, the “machinic” pairing of man with man, or the pairing of a fragment of biological knowledge with another fragment. The methods or hypotheses of the work of bio-engineering are brought to the capacity of a strategy, i.e. because they are simultaneously engendered with their objects, their

products, and their agents, because they stop being “absolute” and become simple relative breaks in a continuous process that they serve to relaunch, as if they helped extract from life this surplus value of power, without which power would be annihilated in the ashes of the existing institutions. The biopolitics of the future does not know—at least for itself—an instance of the living body’s reality, an ethical and scientific principle of life’s reality, but it prepares itself immanently by way of its experimental drives for its implantation into the intimacy and privacy of life. The strategy of the mastery of living bodies supposes their inscription in an immanent field of power Relations, a perpetually redivided and reconstituted, impenetrable network that forms an ultimate plane of matter and power for vital phenomena, a plane of immanence which is the essence of all planification and to which the counter-industrial or über-industrial planification of machine-Man re-turns.

It is under these conditions that the experimentation or “culture” of human stock, “anthropo-culture”, stops being an ideological accident of biology to become the essence of über-industrial man. The destination of the “genetic genius” is inscribed in the biopolitical becoming of this man. What Nietzsche called “grand biology” decomposes the macro- and micro-institutional forms of biology and introduces into them a capacity for self-“potentialization” that can elevate the simple “genetic manipulations” of biocracy to the capacity of a “genetic strategy”, whose (identical) object and subject would be this new *daimon*, the man of the über-machine, the new *genius*... that experiments on himself, as though he experimented on others, who measures all things through his own excessiveness [*démésure*], for whom everything merely serves as a relative limit and springboard...

What is the principle of this new über-anthropological metrics? Universal experimentation means: *infinite* variation of the conditions for obtaining an effect, identity of this infinite variation and of the produced effect in a regularity that combines with it. By becoming an infinite process endowed with the capacity of the continuous, experimentation stops being tied to precise and qualified conditions, to determined effects to be produced; it introduces chance and strategy into the basis of this new mode of the production of man. But if all the conditions of (economic, political, biological, etc.) existence can serve as means, it is not a question of reproducing whichever existing human type, but the only type that is capable of supporting and connecting in a new regularity all the variations or divisions that affect the power Relations from which it is woven, of integrating and relativizing them in a new “über-anthropological” continuum. Relative to the deviations of its fascistic forms, pure biopolitics is such a generalized deviance that it reconstitutes its deviance into an immanent rule. Thus, what will be constituted is a *right of biopolitical experimentation* that will, within the interval of a *right for*... and a *right to*..., inscribe criminals, the marginalized, the inventors of new values, those who consider their life an object of new experiments, who make the pieces of their body or of their mind enter into cruel assemblages, all the “performing” individuals who *themselves* know how to extract a surplus value of capacity from *themselves*, or who will have known how to internalize the means of über-industrial capitalism for the extortion of this supplement of capacity. All these individuals will be treated as athletes to which is connected a bio-feedback process, due to which they lead a continual experimentation on the relations of their vitality and their performances and on their reciprocal variations. Those who will be able to *overcome* this über-training, not only to support this implantation of machines, but to make a non-economic usage and waste of them, to use a computer as a means of relaunching rather than distributing their energy expenditures, or to use a feedback process as a productive rather than simply reproductive recurrence according to a predetermined regime of functioning—they will have the *right to*... life. The individual will be linked to biotechnical databases that will have this particularity of always being the abstract machines of the reproduction and distribution of these data, but in the process of fusing with subjects. Individuals will take on the abstraction of these databases, while the latter will take on subjectivity and the becoming-concrete of individuals. Such a bio-engineering consists in problematizing life, in turning it into a political and juridical problem, but one that can only be resolved by itself. Insofar as the history of the “man-animal” species (Nietzsche) resides in the reciprocal incorporation or fusion of life and social power, it will crown this “machinic” pairing with the constitution of a *techno-juridics*⁸ that is destined to replace medical rights and all the other types of rights in general. This is a “techno-juridics”, because its rules, far from coding and fixing the relations of existing powers, will be on the contrary the emanation of a provisional and momentary state of these relations, the essence of which is disequilibrium. There is a “right” of Right, and biopolitical essence in its movement is what determines it.

The new machine-Man is the “human” type *par excellence*, the type that selects and sorts out the positive in the existing types. But what is a type? It is not exactly the Idea of an individual but an ego potentialized as Idea, an individual that “makes” Idea, an ego identical to the whole chain, the coincidence—from which Plato would have recoiled—of an ego and an idea, the dispersion of a singular *we/us*, a subjective but continuous multiplicity. This biopolitical *a priori* of the man-to-come guarantees the passage from classical Egology and industrial Humanism to über-industrial Typology. This self is a dispersion of power relations, a differential self-of-self, infinitely reflected, relative to itself, and therefore absolute, an infinite pairing...*and self...and self...and self*. It gathers the *whole* possible subjectivity of history, it is also the self of the self, the Ego *ipsissimum*⁹ (Nietzsche) as the self-gathering of history. This machine-Man, the unruliest of the Cartesians, is an egological continuum that gradually connects selves together in the state of breaks or “machines”, a whole self-constitution by means of a variance of divisive moments. As if the pure Ego had ultimately been attached to “self-consciousness” and stopped being the correlate of mathematics and the human sciences, of God and the psychiatrists, to become the object and the subject of universal experimentation. The self-of-self is power-of-self, will-of-self; it includes the experimental will as its essence, and this essence wants to be *causa sui* by experimenting on itself. “We want to become the subjects of our own experiments, our own guinea pigs” (*Gay Science*, 319).

With this communal self that contemplates its own image and is filled with its own Idea, machine-Man abandons the psychological and sociological forms of narcissism and acquires the superior form of the self, the aristocratic form of narcissism.

This self retains the nature of the Relation or of the Idea; it only abandons the inferior forms of gregariousness in order to be constituted as its superior form. This is where Nietzsche and his absolute biopolitics find their limit, although he tries to constitute this limit precisely into an absolute, into a recurrent and self-contained flux: this becoming-man *and* -machine chains to the past man and the techno-political machine *par excellence*, the State-machine. Such is the superior gregariousness, but one that is actually a gregariousness of these false minorities (Nietzschean aristocrats), then the *übermensch*: they accomplish and render absolute the machine-man system, the statist-human complex; they finish *fixing* man—this animal that was not yet fixed—on the water of a river no doubt, but one that is the State-river. You will be like fabricating demons and geniuses of machines, but all the better assembled by the State-machine. From then on, they will be reciprocally subjugated for a co-belonging that will perhaps no longer have an end. Man includes the gregariousness of machines, and the machine includes human subjectivity, but together they are per-verted and converted to themselves. This is the superior, aristocratic herd of machine-men, the form of gregariousness that is the *proprium* of the new biopolitics. This *propre* is neither the living being nor the State, but their simultaneous reduction to their common essence, the cog, the interweaving of their becoming-one-another. Instead of vulgar and reactive elitism, which is sometimes founded on natural competition, sometimes on social competition, sometimes on the innate, sometimes on the acquired, or an elitism that mixes the two, this is a superior, statist elitism that traverses the complementarity of these contraries.

The program of the biopolitics of the future is sketched out, and it surpasses the work of the ruin of capitalism because it leads capitalism to ruin in its own way: to destroy the inferior forms of the state and society, to pass them straightaway from “selection” as an achieved, accomplished form of revolution, and to extract through universal strategy “the superior form of all that is” (Nietzsche), the “new chain”, that which connects its own links as its slaves, the chain a slave of itself, a universal subjugation.. That each man becomes a multiplicity, a “pack” and a State, that he internalizes racism and becomes superior to himself, i.e. to others. A new style of bio-engineering responsible for destroying the average and fascistic forms of racism, its “racial”, “national”, and “imperialist” forms, but one that only empties out the sewers of history the better to create the superior “race” of machine-men couplings. *Dissolve* States, classes, institutions, factories, all forms of community—something will still remain, i.e. ultimately the pure operation of dissolution and production that is linked to accomplished gregariousness, the superior masterful biocracy of bodies and souls, till death do us part [*à la vie à la mort*]. Such a *bio-statist* complex signifies that “men” receive their absolute existence *through* and *for* the State-machine, that their reciprocal fusion or incorporation will occur in a form which Hegel himself would never have dared dream of.

This ultimate epoché of power is hard to ascribe to the future, because it gathers together both the brutality and inhumanity of the past to give them the superior capacity of *überhamnity*, which is instead *the epoché of becoming as such*, and it must be called a *Cratesis universalis*¹⁰, a dissolution of all the average forms of power—fascism and racism, among others—but one that reconstitutes with dissolution the superior form of universal mastery. It is the latter that contains the virtualities of a biopolitical genius that will abandon its current techno-economic and capitalist forms to become a veritable *engineering of domination* that will ultimately find its capacity and its rule in itself. It will therefore retain the nature of an endeavor that is itself dominant, i.e. vicious and circular. Beyond every “ethical” and juridical critique, which would oppose a new universal to it once again, i.e. a generality of man as subject of right (such a subject is from the start subjugated to certain past historical forms of techno-politics), the insufficiency of bio-technè will be concentrated in its vicious nature and a primacy of reproduction that it has not been able to overcome. This is an insufficiency of its very positivity rather than a lack thereof. For the superior racism that it strives to promote lacks neither right nor justice such as they have always existed in history, since this racism instead transvaluates and cannot be opposed, as the moderns believe, without giving it supplementary weapons. This is the vice and perversion of mastery that is no longer justifiable except to itself, of Domination as *causa sui* and as the immanent field of history. They can no longer be perceived and figured out (or justified) except from a “point of view” that defines another essence than that of intra-historical right and of the über-industrial right of the superior form of man and techno-juridics. *Minorities*, which are no longer defined as the object of a bio-technè or of the *inventiveness*—the *dexterity* (*Schicksal—destiny*)—of the State, could ultimately overcome biopolitical parallelism and subtract life, its *vivance* or *vivality*¹¹, from this naturalist and political mixture of life and power called vitality, which is the heart, perhaps indestructible, of racism.

1 [Rendering Laruelle's reprisal of La Mettrie's title *L'homme machine* as “machine-Man” follows the most recent translation of this book by Ann Thomson (1996)—TN].

2 This phrase “changement de terrain”, which Laruelle will repeat and use in many of his works, stems from the French translation of Marx's *Capital* by M. J. Roy and is also noted in particular by Althusser in his *Reading Capital*. Interestingly enough, Marx's German does not use this phrase but instead refers to an “unconscious substitution of questions”, which more appropriately fits with Laruelle's own gloss here as concerning a change of “problematic”—TN].

3 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1977, p. 136.

4 *Ibid.*

5 [This echoes Lacan's statement that the signifier “represents the subject for other signifiers”—TN].

6 [This is a reference to Charlie Chaplin's character in the movie—TN].

7 [This notion should be taken in the sense in which Descartes uses the term, when he announces the thought experiment of an “evil genius” or an “evil demon”, both of which refer back to the original Greek term of the guiding spirit, *daimon*—TN].

8 [Here, for Laruelle’s neologism *techno-juridique*, I have opted for a simple transliteration that unfortunately also results in its own neologism—TN].

9 [In Latin, this word signifies “own very self”, and its grammatical form is that of the superlative, thus strangely implying the “very most self”—TN].

10 [The law of molecular cratesis indicates the tendency for a molecule to vary in accordance with its combination with other molecules (depending on various parameters)—TN].

11 [These are neologisms of the way in which the word “life” (*vie*) gets modified in various forms (survivance, conviviality, etc.)—TN].

Laruelle, François. “Homo ex Machina”, *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Étranger*, vol. 170, no. 3, 1980, pp. 325-342.

Translated by Taylor Adkins
taken from here

← PREVIOUS NEXT →

-
- META
- CONTACT
- FORCE-INC/MILLE PLATEAUX
- IMPRESSUM
- DATENSCHUTZERKLÄRUNG
- TAXONOMY
- CATEGORIES
- TAGS
- AUTHORS
- ALL INPUT
- SOCIAL
- FACEBOOK
- INSTAGRAM
- TWITTER